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Hindley's 'reckless dissipation': Making Drunkenness Public in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*

Pam Lock

Abstract:

This paper discusses the place of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) in contemporary public discourses about male drunkenness and 'alcoholism'. Much has been written on the sisters' experience of their brother Branwell's drinking in relation to the harmful habitual drunkenness depicted in their novels. However, I propose that the pivotal role of alcoholism (a term only coined in 1849) in the Brontë sisters' writing was a product, not only of personal experience, but of their knowledge of contemporary medical and public discourses on harmful drinking. The 'coarseness' of Emily's descriptions of Hindley's decline into dissipation shocked critics at the time but are commensurate with contemporary medical and temperance accounts. Emily's artistic interpretation of contemporary theories on the complex progression of comfort-drinking into compulsive inebriation addresses and challenges received ideas about 'alcoholism', grief, marriage, class, and heredity.

Keywords

Emily Brontë, Alcohol, Drunkenness, *Wuthering Heights*, Suicide, Grief, Victorian, Novel

Hindley's 'reckless dissipation': Making Drunkenness Public in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*

For himself he grew desperate; his sorrow was of that kind that will not lament: he neither wept nor prayed—he cursed and defied, execrated God and man, and gave himself up to reckless dissipation.

By prefacing Hindley's violent reaction to his wife's death (cursing, execrations, dissipation) with a rejection of socially acceptable behaviour (weeping and praying, which are invoked only negatively), the narrator, Nelly, invites the reader to contrast society's expectations of a grieving widower with Hindley's blasphemy.¹ Marianne Thormählen discusses the Brontës' treatment of Christian expectations of patience and faith when faced with grief and injustice in *The Brontës and Religion*. She notes that the sisters explore the 'doubt and anger' that 'constantly undercut trust in the Divine order' which Thormählen also identifies in the sisters' letters and diary entries. The first clause off Nelly's description explains the difference; Hindley's peculiar 'kind' of sorrow generates his reaction; he cannot express it in a conventional 'lament' but instead gives 'himself up' to 'reckless dissipation' (*WH*, p. 89). This surrender encompasses two vices — excessive drinking and gambling — and each exacerbates the other. In this scene in *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Emily Brontë plays on the double meaning of 'reckless'; Hindley is both careless of his drinking's consequences and neglects his duty to his family and estate (*WH*, p. 89). His failures as a father-figure drive the tragic narrative. Excessive drinking begins as a comfort for him but quickly becomes compulsive. In the end, Hindley drinks himself to death in a gradual suicide. The period of years between his wife's death and his own are marked by a carelessness for his life and several other suicide attempts. Emily's revelations about Hindley's coarse drunkenness challenge contemporary assumptions that problem drinking was a social issue specific to the working-classes.

Hindley's intemperate grieving led early critics to describe him with horror. For instance, the *Atlas*'s reviewer termed him a 'brutal, degraded sot'.² Recent critics, however, are more sympathetic. Ingrid Geerken describes *Wuthering Heights* as a 'literary treatise on wild grief', while Laura Inman argues that 'death also sets off the despair in Hindley that exacerbates his alcoholism, which leads to the loss of everything he owns'.³ However, I argue that Emily Brontë's exploration of the multiple causes of habitual drunkenness, such as grief and inherited weakness, draws on her own experience with her brother's drinking and her father's temperance work, her medical and scientific education, as well as a broad range of literary influences. Critics have so far underestimated the significance of contemporary medical discourse about problem drinking to the characterisation of Hindley. Through comparisons with contemporary medical writing and temperance rhetoric, I seek to balance the privileging of literary influences, such as Byron and Milton, when addressing dissipation in Emily Brontë's work and assert the place of *Wuthering Heights* in up-to-date discourses of drinking and drunkenness. In doing so, I interrogate two definitions of 'coarse': firstly, of persons and class as '[w]anting in delicacy of perception, apprehension, action; [...] Not refined or delicate, rough', 'common or ordinary'; and, secondly, of language where the "gross, indelicate" passes into [the] 'indecent, obscene'.⁴ This paper also compares approaches to representations of male drunkenness in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) because of the dialogue between the two sisters' writings and the corresponding focus on problem drinking.

Charlotte's work is excluded from consideration here because, apart from detailed accounts of 'alcoholic' war heroes in her Angrian juvenilia, her novels are less concerned with the male 'alcoholic'.⁵ In fact, it is worth noting at this point that, while I occasionally use the terms 'alcoholism' and 'alcoholic' for the sake of brevity, strictly speaking it is an anachronism in relation to any period before Magnus Huss's 1849 coinage in 'Alcoholismus chronicus'.

The coarseness of Emily's dissolute characters in *Wuthering Heights* differs from representations of dissipation in her sisters' novels. In Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, the dissipated landowner, Arthur Huntingdon, is paired with a sober and 'civilised' partner — his wife, Helen — for comparison. But in *Wuthering Heights*, Hindley is paired, after his wife's death, with the sober, misanthropic Heathcliff. Heathcliff pursues his revengeful mission to hasten Hindley's financial and moral dissolution and to take the Heights for himself when they 'sit up all night' and do 'nothing but play and drink' (WH, p. 122). Hindley borrows money on his land to cover his growing losses which are worsened by his continuous intoxication. Hindley's roughness and drunkenness are also attributed by Nelly to his father: both through heredity, in what Nelly describes as the 'Earnshaw's violent dispositions'; and through the emotional damage of Mr. Earnshaw's preference for Heathcliff (WH, p. 144). Nelly remembers Hindley's violent rejection of the new addition as he grew 'bitter with brooding over' the 'usurper of his parent's affections' and later hints that Hindley's drunkenness may be hereditary when she describes Hindley and Catherine's father seeking 'solace in drink' when they were children (WH, p. 67; 198). The resulting destructive relationship between the two men in adulthood fosters Heathcliff's revengeful complicity in Hindley's self-destructive actions, creating a very different co-dependent relationship to that described by Anne in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* between Helen and Arthur.

Reviewers also criticised Anne's novel for its coarseness, recoiling from the 'revolting scenes' at Arthur Huntingdon's 'brutified estate'.⁶ However, the manifestation of Huntingdon's 'alcoholism' differs considerably from Hindley's. Huntingdon's decline is gradual and careless; at first, he drinks heavily for pleasure and, as Gwen Hyman points out, is both unashamed of his 'partying' and 'seems to understand that perpetual drunkenness can only end badly'.⁷ Late in the day, he discovers that he can no longer control his urge to drink and, ultimately, he dies of delirium tremens. Hindley's recklessness, though, is charged with a plangent melancholy, which allows Emily to explore different aspects of habitual drunkenness. As Stevie Davies argues, 'Emily Brontë provides an authenticating framework of explanation by detailing the traumatic events of childhood that pitch Hindley, Catherine, Heathcliff and Hareton into the cycle of tragedy and violence'.⁸ This carefully constructed 'authenticating framework' challenges the concept of socially acceptable grieving. Hindley's execrations against God at the loss of his wife may be a response to Elizabeth Barrett Browning's sonnet, 'Grief', published just a year before Emily started to write *Wuthering Heights*. Emily's approach, that 'grief does not follow a pattern of amelioration, but rather can become more intense with the passage of time', echoes Barrett Browning's description of grieving as an 'everlasting watch' ticking within her.⁹ However, Hindley's blasphemy challenges Barrett Browning's claim that 'only men incredulous of despair [...] Beat upward to God's throne'.¹⁰ There is a selfishness about his reaction (which I will discuss later) but his violence is nonetheless a genuine expression of his grief and not simply a result of his drunkenness.

The Reverend Patrick Brontë's involvement in temperance campaigning spanned the transitional period from the early 1830s, when 'temperance was a traditional middle-class

movement with clergymen and upper-class reformers providing leadership for the largely middle-class membership who, out of Christian charity, were helping their lesser brethren fight intemperance'; and from 'the mid 1830s to the late 1840s, when working-class teetotallers dominated the movement'.¹¹ Temperance publications were crucial to the societies' campaign, and arguments for moderation and abstinence were frequently backed by contemporary medical advice.¹² For example, respected medics such as Dr F. R. Lees and Dr William Carpenter wrote for temperance newspapers and had anti-drink articles published in the mainstream press. Although no temperance pamphlets or fictions survive in the Parsonage collection, as President and founder member of the Haworth Temperance Society, Patrick would undoubtedly have circulated them to his parishioners as part of his temperance work.

This article extends existing biographical and socio-cultural readings of the drunkenness portrayed in *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848). Sally Shuttleworth's investigations into the Brontës' interest in Phrenology (a movement closely linked to temperance campaigns) and Marianne Thormählen and Janis McLarren Caldwell's early work on the family's medical reference book, Thomas John Graham's *Modern Domestic Medicine* (1826), have revealed the influence of contemporary medical and scientific theories on the Brontë sisters' writing, dealing in some detail with their approaches to drinking and drunkenness.¹³ With regard to drunkenness more directly, however, critical attention to date has focused more on Anne's novel than on Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, most likely due to the centrality of alcoholism to that work. Beth Torgerson argues that, in *Tenant*, Anne's 'goals for writing [were] social reform', as outlined in her 'Preface to the Second Edition'.¹⁴ Gwen Hyman focuses on the drinking habits of Arthur Huntingdon and his cronies, arguing that, by the 1840s, the figure of the 'gentleman' had become performative so that Huntingdon must fulfil 'his role by filling himself with the stuff of gentlemanliness'; in other words, expensive food and drink.¹⁵ Hindley's place in the yeomanry, with aspirational sights on social advancement, mean his drinking could be read in this way, but in fact his approach to drunkenness lowers his social status because of his choice of companions and his public binges in Gimmerton. The latter, in fact, are reminiscent of Branwell's enjoyment of drinking at the Black Bull in Haworth, where he had 'the undesirable distinction of having his company recommended by the landlord [...] to any chance traveller who might happen to feel solitary or dull over his liquor'.¹⁶ The following analysis acknowledges and builds on this critical inheritance to explore Emily's approach to male drunkenness through the character of Hindley Earnshaw. The analysis loosely follows Hindley's life in chronological order to explore his descent into uncontrolled dissipation step-by-step and demonstrate Emily's medical and psychological understanding of this progression.

Glass Half Empty

In Nelly's flashbacks to her childhood play with Hindley, he is calm and quiet. She remembers them storing 'snail-shells and pebbles' in the base of a guide-post symbolically carved with the initials of *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange (*WH*, p. 126). In her vision, he is silently and contentedly focused on the task, 'scooping out the earth with a piece of slate' (*WH*, p. 126). Their collaborative effort belies the social division between the two children so carefully enforced by Hindley as an adult. Torgerson argues that a shift takes place when his father travels to Liverpool: 'from the moment of his childhood request for a violin from Liverpool, Hindley [is] aligned with culture [and] individual self-interest' in contrast to

Catherine and Heathcliff who are aligned with nature and sharing.¹⁷ Hindley is fourteen and therefore ripe for the transition into puberty.¹⁸ Emily takes pains to specify ages for Hindley, Catherine, and Heathcliff as they pass through puberty, rarely mentioning the age of characters before they reach twelve or after they are twenty years old, demonstrating a special interest in this transitional period. Hindley's shift from non-hierarchical shared play with Nelly to "civilized" self-interest is clearly linked to this transition from child to adult. However, his refinement is relative and susceptible to his uneven temper. Later, self-absorption exacerbates his dissipated reaction to grief, leaving him less able to cope with loss or to subjugate his own feelings for the good of his dependents and community.

When Hindley returns as master of Wuthering Heights with his mysterious new wife, Frances, he introduces a new, brutal regime for Catherine and Heathcliff, but alcohol is not yet associated with his violence, or even mentioned. In fact, Catherine quotes Hindley telling Heathcliff that he insists on 'perfect sobriety and silence' (WH, p. 51). The beatings administered to Heathcliff render Hindley 'red and breathless' (WH, p. 83), and Catherine is frequently forced to fast as punishment. Hindley's violence to Heathcliff leaves Catherine unable to eat her dinner and leads to Heathcliff brooding on how to 'pay Hindley back' (WH, p. 85). In contrast, the Linton children's tears are soon forgotten through 'bountiful platefuls' dished out by the master himself, followed by dancing and carol-singing with the Gimmerton band (WH, p. 84). At this stage, Hindley's hereditary propensity for the Earnshaws' 'violent dispositions' is predominantly under control and private. The beating at the party is administered behind closed doors, and he exerts himself to cheer and civilize the company with food and entertainment after Heathcliff's removal (WH, p. 144). Edgar and Isabella match Hindley's version of 'polite society' by representing the callous blind-eye turned by the higher echelons of society on the oppression of the labouring classes.

The attribution of coarseness requires the judgement of an observer, so only when Hindley's excessive drinking causes him to stop hiding his natural vulgarity beyond the immediate family does the community criticize him. Dr Kenneth describes Hindley as an 'old companion' after his death, but comments that 'he's been too wild for me this long while' (WH, p. 189). When, after Frances's death, Hindley gives 'himself up to reckless dissipation' — as Nelly phrases it — his aspirational behaviour changes (WH, p. 89). Nelly observes that: 'the master avoided offending [Edgar], knowing why he came, and if he could not be gracious, kept out of the way' (WH, p. 90). Hindley's regard for Edgar as a potential husband for Catherine and his desire for the family to appear respectable to the Lintons for the purpose of the match remains, so he chooses to absent himself when his self-control is eroded by grief and intoxication.

Hindley's initial urge to seek comfort from alcohol can be read in light of the poet, philosopher and physician, Friedrich Schiller's highly masculinised portrayal of warriors drinking after battle such as 'The Victory Feast' (1803). The family owned the complete works in German and it also appeared in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in 1843:

Drink — in the draught new strength is glowing,
The grief it bathes forgets the smart!
O Bacchus! Wond'rous boons bestowing,
Oh how thy balsam heals the heart!
Drink — in the draught new vigour gloweth,

The grief it bathes forgets the smart —
And balsam to the breaking heart,
The healing god bestowest¹⁹

Schiller imagines the Greeks' bittersweet celebrations after the fall of Troy. '[S]mart' is twice rhymed with 'heart' to signify psychic pain associated with emotion. Naming Bacchus as the beneficent 'healing god' providing 'balsam' confirms that the unnamed 'drink' is alcoholic. The result of the drink — 'vigour' — represents a re-masculinisation through forgetfulness. Schiller makes it clear that the earthly version of Lethe water offers only a temporary oblivion; the poem ends in an uncertainty about the future and a slightly desperate assertion to 'live to-day!'.²⁰ Emily goes further than Schiller's euphemistic approach in her vividly detailed account of the decline that can result from seeking 'vigour' from alcohol too frequently. Emily's choice to provide minute details reflects her experience of Branwell's total focus in this period on 'nothing but stunning or drowning his agony of mind'.²¹ The *OED* demonstrates the progressive sense of 'dissipation' through the unusual step of linking two entries:

5. Distraction of the mental faculties or energies from concentration on serious subjects: at first [...] as the scattering or distraction of attention, or with laudatory sense, as the dispelling of melancholy or sadness; [...] but later implying the frittering away of energies or attention upon frivolities, and thus gradually passing into sense 6.

6. Waste of the moral and physical powers by undue or vicious indulgence in pleasure; intemperate, dissolute, or vicious mode of living.²²

The *OED*'s use of 'vicious indulgence' and 'waste' demonstrates the coarseness associated with 'dissipation'. Hindley's complete surrender to 'distractions' to dispel his melancholy rapidly turns into the 'vicious mode of living' noted in definition 6. This is manifested by an urge to put himself in dangerous situations and to imbibe stultifying quantities of alcohol; in other words, he becomes suicidal, in the sense that he is increasingly careless with his life. As I have argued elsewhere, Hindley's suicidal tendencies manifest as a form of alcoholism later identified as toxicomania or sub-intentioned death. The progression described in the *OED* is similar to twentieth-century suicidologist Jean Baechler's series of hypotheses on the relationship between intoxication and suicide:

1. Intoxication induces psychic and physical changes in the subject, which may lead to suicide either by the intermediary of a change in mood or by driving him into an objective situation that has no other outcome but death

2. Intoxication is an alternative solution, a less extreme solution, to a problem that might have been resolved by suicide.

3. Intoxication is an alternative solution but it is a bad one, insofar as it is only provisional and leads to a state where the problem once again appears, this time more sharply, so that the prospect of an intermediate solution tends to fade, and only the risk of a suicidal solution becomes greater.²³

Emily's sympathetic (rather than pitying or critical) depiction indicates an understanding of the difficulty of escaping this psychological trap. Both Hindley and Heathcliff demonstrate excessive behaviour in their grief with similarly fatal results, but Hindley's compulsive

ingestion is in sharp contrast to Heathcliff's 'absences from meals [and an] inability to eat'.²⁴ This link between habitual drunkenness and self-destruction was recognised in the early nineteenth century by physician and apothecary to Bethlem Hospital, John Haslam, in his well-known book, *Observations on Madness and Melancholy* (1809):

a man who tries to commit suicide by other means (strangulation, slashing his wrists, poisoning), he is unquestionably committed to some sort of advance care, but a drunkard is allowed, without control, by a gradual process, to undermine the fabric of his own health, and destroy the prosperity of his family on drunkenness²⁴

Haslam's argument that without interference a drunkard will gradually destroy his health and wealth is echoed in Dr. Kenneth's apparent powerlessness to counter Hindley's urge to drink.

Catherine's decision to reject both Hindley and Heathcliff as father-figure and husband respectively is, in part, a result of their tendency to excess, thus revealing Edgar as the moderate, safe choice. The representation of Catherine's marriageability and her drunken father-figure (Hindley) corresponds to that in contemporary temperance writings. Scott C. Martin observes that '[t]he "drunkard's daughter" became a stock character in temperance writings, reflecting middle-class anxiety about perpetuating social status through advantageous marital alliances'.²⁵ Lockwood's discovery of Catherine's Christian name scratched into the paint on her bed and attached respectively to the surnames of the three key men in her life (Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Heathcliff, Catherine Linton) mark her gendered position between possession and agent (*WH*, p. 50). Public knowledge of a father's drunkenness 'compromised a family's propriety, casting doubt on the suitability of its female offspring for connection with respectable middle-class families'.²⁶ Thus, I argue Catherine's quick acceptance of Edgar's marriage proposal is motivated by practical considerations; she has a limited window of opportunity before her father-figure becomes too disreputable for Edgar to accept her. She cannot wait to see if Heathcliff will return or with enough wealth to support them. In his absence, Hindley recruits Nelly as chaperone to 'make a third party in any private visits Linton chose to pay' (*WH*, p. 93). As the young people's courtship develops, Nelly's obstructive presence causes Catherine to hurt Nelly and then Hareton in Edgar's presence. When he steps in, she strikes him. Catherine's violent show of sexual frustration, strongly suggested by her wish to be alone with Edgar, shocks him initially, but it also intensifies his attraction to her. On this realisation, Edgar closes the door on Nelly and the young couple are closeted alone for 'a while' (*WH*, p.95). The closing of the door marks Edgar's transition into manhood by taking control. Hindley's return, drunk and violent, causes Nelly to re-enter the room to warn them. She finds that their conflict has 'effected a closer intimacy' and they are now 'lovers' (*WH*, p. 95). In the end, the father-figure's surveillance has brought them together sooner.

When Hareton hides from his rampaging father 'rabid drunk, ready to pull the whole place about our ears', Hindley threatens his son with mutilation (trimming) of his ears usually carried out in this period on working or fighting dogs to give attacking wolves and other dogs less to get hold of: "don't you think the lad would be handsomer cropped? It makes a dog fiercer, and I love something fierce—get me the scissors" (*WH*, pp. 95; 96). Until the leisured classes' appropriation of dog-cropping for dog shows in the 1860s, the act of cropping would have been performed by labourers and servants.²⁷ The mad dog imagery in this engagement

between father and son therefore demonstrates the threat Hindley's drinking habits are to his son's social status as well as his physical safety. It also recalls the case study in the family medical reference book, Dr Graham's *Modern Domestic Medicine*, in which the author recounts the case of a young man 'violently drunk' and 'armed with a knife' who was found 'running at his parents, with his eyes glaring, and his mouth foaming'.²⁸ The foaming mouth in Graham's case study is echoed in Hindley's 'rabid' state, as is the phallic weaponry they brandish at their loved ones. A moment later Hindley's mood changes: "Hush, child, hush! Well then, it is my darling! Wisht, dry they eyes—there's a joy; kiss me" (*WH*, p. 96). Hindley's mood shifts rapidly in this passage from threatening to re-shape his son's ears with scissors like a 'fierce' dog to attempting to comfort the boy with kisses and soft noises ('hush', 'wisht'). When this approach fails, Hindley holds his son over a bannister and absent-mindedly drops him as Hareton wriggles to escape his grasp despite the danger below (*WH*, p. 96). Heathcliff's 'natural impulse' to catch the boy saves him, foreshadowing his later guardianship of Hareton after Hindley's death (*WH*, pp.96-7). Such mood-swings were commonly attributed to habitual drunkenness and delirium tremens in contemporary medical accounts and is also used to explain Huntingdon's erratic behaviour in Anne's *Tenant*. Hindley's emotional range has been reduced to violent extremes.

Nelly then describes Hindley descending 'more leisurely, sobered and abashed' (*WH*, p. 97). He observes: "It is your fault, Ellen," he said, 'you should have kept him out of sight; you should have taken him from me!" (*WH*, p. 97). With his wife gone, Hindley is paired up with enabling co-dependents Nelly or Heathcliff. If there is a love-triangle between Catherine, Edgar, and Heathcliff, there is a co-dependence triangle between Hindley, Heathcliff, and Nelly. Hindley's attribution of 'fault' to Nelly determines the co-dependence in his relationship with her. Nelly describes Hindley as both 'master and foster-brother' (*WH*, p. 189). Her claim on him as kin and her grief on his death demonstrate their close emotional bond. As Catherine MacGregor argues, Anne also uses the rhetoric of co-dependence in *Tenant*.²⁹ Again, she lingers on the notion of 'fault' when Helen passionately writes: 'he may drink himself dead, but it is NOT my fault' (*Tenant*, p. 279). The sisters are, in their own way, writing against temperance narratives which present the wife or family as saviour. The repetition of 'fault' in both novels indicates that Emily and Anne's explorations of blame are likely to be reflections on Branwell's tendency to blame others for his dissipation. He is quoted by Elizabeth Gaskell in early editions of the *Life* as whispering 'it's *her* fault, *her* fault' (referring to Mrs. Robinson) during his fits of delirium tremens.³⁰

The lack of extant letters and other writings by Emily makes it difficult to establish her estimation of Branwell's regular intoxication. Writing to Ellen Nussey, Charlotte says that: 'Emily tells me that he got a sovereign from Papa while I have been away under pretence of paying a pressing debt—he went immediately & changed it at a public-house—and has employed it as was to be expected—she concluded her account with saying he was "a hopeless being"'.³¹ Charlotte concurs and pontificates on 'what the future has in store' for their brother, a frequent theme of her letters at this time. She ominously concludes 'I do not know'.³² Charlotte's letters and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life* indicate that Branwell's presence in the house was increasingly threatening and embarrassing. In July 1845, Charlotte predicts a 'season of distress and disquietude' to Ellen Nussey and, in September, complains that 'while he is at home I will invite no one to come and share our discomfort'.³³ The novel suggests this

deliberate isolation at Wuthering Heights as Hindley's behaviour worsens, the servants depart, and his 'bad companions' take over the house (WH, p.89).

Hindley's 'bad companions' are never named or physically described (WH, p. 89). They are made more indeterminate by Catherine's description of them as genderless and classless 'some persons' (WH, p. 188). The 'scenes of riot' with which they are associated are never described and their anonymous presence in the house, gambling and drinking with Hindley, makes them threateningly spectral (WH, p. 199). As a result, they seem a part of his dissipation, attracted or even conjured by his vulnerability, rather than individuals with their own separate motivations and personalities. Their anonymity contrasts with Arthur Huntingdon's 'profligate companions' in Anne's *Tenant*, who are carefully drawn and differentiated.³⁴ Huntingdon's associates form a cautionary continuum of the archetype of the dissipated gentleman: from the repentance and amended behaviour of Lowborough and Hattersley; to the unrepentant and grisly deaths of Huntingdon and Grimsby. This array bears a striking resemblance to well-known series such as Hogarth's 'A Rake's Progress' (1732–4) and Cruikshank's 'The Bottle' (1847). Anne takes care to describe their drunken antics in detail and, like Hogarth's paintings, her narrator's warnings are simultaneously comic and darkly sinister. Huntingdon's frequent drunkenness is attributed to boredom, an enjoyment of masculine company, and a lack of self-discipline. He enjoys the thrill of being deliberately vulgar in company. For example, in Chapter 31, when the gentlemen return from table, Arthur talks drunkenly to Helen's friend and Hattersley's wife, Millicent:

pushing his head into her face [...] It must have been intolerable nonsense at best, for she looked excessively annoyed, and first went red in the face, then indignantly pushed back her chair, and finally took refuge behind me on the sofa. Arthur's sole intention seemed to have been to produce some such disagreeable effect: he laughed immoderately on finding he had driven her away. (WH, pp. 243–44)

Helen's guess—that his talk is 'intolerable nonsense at best'—only half-disguises her anxiety about the actual level of coarseness of the whispered conversation (WH, p. 244).

Emily associates no comedy with Hindley's drunkenness. Emily identifies grief as the source of his destructive behaviour and reveals it to the reader in a manner that does not disguise his faults, but explains them. His mix of coarseness and drunkenness is part of a broader pattern of self-abuse and suicidal urges which Emily approaches not with disgust, as Anne does with Huntingdon and his unrepentant companions, but with compassion. Nelly compares Hindley's reaction to Frances' death with Edgar's reaction to Catherine's death. She remembers Edgar as 'too good to be thoroughly unhappy long' and notes his swift progression to 'a melancholy sweeter than common joy', soon doting on his new daughter, Cathy (WH, p. 188). Edgar's 'courage' is attributed to his faith: 'he trusted God; and God comforted' (WH, p. 188). In contrast, Nelly observes that: 'Hindley, with apparently the stronger head, has shown himself sadly the worse and the weaker man. When his ship struck, the captain abandoned his post; and the crew, instead of trying to save her, rushed into riot and confusion, leaving no hope for their luckless vessel' (WH, p. 188). Nelly's appeals for him to 'have mercy on [his] own soul' are met with scornful blasphemy: "Not I! On the contrary, I shall have great pleasure in sending it to perdition to punish its maker," exclaimed the blasphemer. 'Here's to its hearty damnation!' (WH, p. 97). The coupling of 'hearty' and 'damnation' as Hindley drinks to his

blasphemous toast demonstrates the extent of his self-destructive urge. He wishes to not only destroy his body but also his soul out of spite to a God he considers to have injured him.

Emily also writes the increasingly medically accepted idea that ‘drunkenness appears to be in some measure hereditary’ into Hindley’s characterization.³⁵ In Chapter 17, Nelly reports Isabella’s story of when she and Hindley attempted to shut Heathcliff out of the Heights. To regain entry, Heathcliff stabbed Hindley in the arm and then savagely beat him as a punishment for the rebellion. When Heathcliff orders Joseph to clear up Hindley’s blood, he makes a joke about heredity: “Wash that stuff away; and mind the sparks of your candle – it is more than half brandy!” (WH, p. 183). By describing Hindley’s blood as half-spirits, Heathcliff not only emphasises Hindley’s intoxication, but also implies that his problem drinking is inherited. This is confirmed in the following chapter when Nelly confides to Lockwood that the Earnshaws’ father sought ‘solace in drink’ (WH, p. 198). Emily may have been familiar with Robert Macnish’s work, as her father admired his book on sleep, and he also wrote on Phrenology (Charlotte and Anne’s special interest in the late 1840s). Patrick Brontë makes two annotations to the entry ‘Of Insanity’ in Dr Graham’s *Modern Domestic Medicine* (1826): he adds a footnote on ‘Delirium Tremens’ and underlines ‘hereditary disposition’.³⁶ Both Charlotte and Anne include the suggestion of a hereditary aspect in the dissipation of Bertha Rochester and Arthur Huntingdon: Bertha’s mother, Rochester advises, was a drinker; Helen Huntingdon fears her son may have a ‘natural propensity to intemperance because both her father and husband are habitual drinkers so she cultivates an aversion to wine and spirits in her son (Tenant, p. 66; 57).

Finally, both Emily and Anne choose horrifying deaths for their drunkards, portrayed in uncompromising detail. This was unusual. Patrick Brontë’s narrator in *The Cottage in the Wood* specifies that his protagonist does not ‘like many in his circumstances [...] come to an ignominious end’.³⁷ Like the majority of drunkards in 1840s temperance fiction, Bower is saved by the intervention of his wife and dies repentantly anticipating an afterlife in heaven. Anne reserves ‘cure’ for subsidiary characters like Hattersley and Lowborough to remind the reader of the fictional ‘norm’ in favour of Huntingdon’s horrifying death scene in which he dies unrepentant of delirium tremens prompted by a minor riding accident.³⁸ Anne argues in her ‘Preface to the Second Edition’ that ‘if there were less of this delicate concealment of facts – this whispering of “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace, there would be less of sin and misery to the young of both sexes who are left to wring their bitter knowledge from experience’.³⁹ She uses dirt imagery when arguing that an author must ‘dive’ into the ‘mud and water’ and ‘incur scorn and obloquy’ to reveal truths about the hidden corruption of society’s casual acceptance of drunkenness among young men.⁴⁰ In Emily’s novel, Heathcliff’s description of Hindley’s death suggests apoplexy, a condition commonly associated with habitual drunkenness:

We broke in this morning, for we heard him snorting like a horse; and there he was, laid over the settle – flaying and scalping would not have wakened him – I sent for Kenneth, and he came; but not till the beast had changed into carrion - he was both dead and cold, and stark (WH, p. 190)

Heathcliff’s grotesque description of Hindley ‘snorting like a horse’ corresponds to Dr Graham’s description of laborious breathing as a symptom of apoplexy. Graham’s polite description of this manifestation of apoplexy was brought to life more vividly in contemporary

local newspapers such as *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, which, on 25 September 1841, reported a woman who ‘died from apoplexy, caused by excessive drinking’, who ‘snored and breathed hard’ when her husband found her ‘on the house floor’.⁴¹ Emily’s choice of animalistic and undignified terms to describe Hindley’s death, particularly by contrast with Heathcliff’s controlled and smiling death, de-glamorizes excessive drinking and reminds the reader of its undignified medical consequences.

Given that Emily identified Branwell as a ‘hopeless being’ to Charlotte at this time, and Anne’s declaration of her determination to reveal what she saw to be the truth, their decision to destroy their fictional male drunkards demonstrates a pessimism about their brother’s future, or a desire to warn him through their writing.⁴² Huntingdon’s unrelenting suffering tells the often-concealed story of the drunkards who do not cease drinking, usually mentioned in passing in temperance fiction for comparison. Hindley Earnshaw’s drunkenness is both coarse and pitiable; a distinctive combination for a character of intermediate social status in a Victorian novel. Emily challenges notions that grief could be contained in socially accepted expressions with realistic coarse language and violent behaviour. Her medical knowledge and personal experience of compulsive and self-destructive drunkenness are realised publicly and openly in Hindley’s decline after his wife’s death. His reaction to grief is refined from a mix of the causes Emily had read about and experienced first-hand. Hindley’s turbulent upbringing, a hereditarily passionate nature and propensity for ‘alcoholism’, and the uncertainty of his ambiguous social position in the yeomanry are influenced by medical and fictional writings with which she was familiar, and her brother’s behaviour at home during the writing of *Wuthering Heights*. In doing so, she also explores feelings of fault and co-dependence. Her description of Branwell as a ‘hopeless being’ is played out in Hindley’s fatal ‘reckless dissipation’.

Notes

¹ Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ed. by Beth Newman (Plymouth: Broadview Press, 2007), p. 89. Hereafter *WH*.

² ‘From an unsigned review’, *Atlas*, (22 January 1848), p. 59 in Miriam Farris Allott, *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 230.

³ Ingrid Geerken, “‘The Dead Are Not Annihilated’: Mortal Regret in *Wuthering Heights*,” *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 34:3 (Fall 2004), p.377; Laura Inman “‘The Awful Event’ in *Wuthering Heights*,” *Brontë Studies*, 33:3 (2008), p.193.

⁴ *OED Online*, s.v. ‘coarse’: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/35124?redirectedFrom=coarse#eid>, [accessed 14 April 18].

⁵ See Emma Butcher, ‘War Trauma and Alcoholism in the Early Writings of Charlotte and Branwell Brontë’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 22.4 (2017) 465–81.

⁶ Unsigned Review, *Sharpe's London Magazine*, 7 (August 1848), 181–84; *Athenaeum*, No. 1080 (8 July 1848), 670–71 in ‘Appendix B: Contemporary Reviews’ in Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, ed. by Lee A. Talley (Plymouth: Broadview Editions, 2009), pp. 439, 418. Hereafter chapter and page number references in main text refer to this edition. Abbreviated where necessary to *Tenant*.

⁷ Hyman, p.57.

⁸ Stevie Davies, *Emily Brontë: Heretic* (London: The Women's Press Ltd, 1994), p.121.

⁹ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Poems. Vol I* (London: Edward Moxon, 1844), p.129; Inman, p.194.

¹⁰ Barrett Browning, p.129.

¹¹ Lilian Lewis Shiman, *Crusade against Drink in Victorian England* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1988), pp. 3–4.

¹² See Brian Harrison, 'Drunkards and Reformers. Early Victorian Temperance Tracts', *History Today*, 13.3 (1963), p. 178.

¹³ Beth Torgerson, *Reading the Brontë Body. Disease, Desire and the Constraints of Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.20.

¹⁴ Sally Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Marianne Thormählen, 'The Villain of "Wildfell Hall": Aspects and Prospects of Arthur Huntingdon', *The Modern Language Review*, 88.4 (1993) 831-41; Janis McLarren Caldwell, *Literature and Medicine in Nineteenth-Century Britain: From Mary Shelley to George Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁵ Gwen Hyman, *Making a Man: Gentlemanly Appetites in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), p. 68.

¹⁶ Gaskell, p.154; See Ann Dinsdale, 'Branwell Brontë and the Landlord of The Black Bull', *Brontë Society Transactions*, 21.7 (1996), 357–59.

¹⁷ Torgerson, p. 98.

¹⁸ Twelve to fifteen was considered the average age for Victorian boys to reach this stage. M. Jeanne Peterson, 'Precocious Puberty in the Victorian Medical Gaze', *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, 4:2 (Summer 2008), <http://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue42/peterson.htm#note4>, [13 June 18].

¹⁹ Friedrich von Schiller, *Schiller's Complete Works Vol. I* (Philadelphia: I. Kohler, 1861), p. 112. Brontës' copy: Friedrich von Schiller, *Schiller's Sammliche Werke in zwolf banden* (Stuttgart und Tübingen, 1838); bb205, pp. 228–32; *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine. Vol. LIII. January-June 1843* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1843). Maggie Allen argues that the 'German Romantic influence' can be seen in Emily's work such as fragment poetry similar to Schiller's. Maggie Allen, 'Emily Brontë and the Influence of the German Romantic Poets', *Brontë Studies*, 30.1 (2013), 7-10, pp. 8-9.

²⁰ Schiller, p. 112.

²¹ 'To Ellen Nussey, 31 July 1845' in Margaret Smith, *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë Volume One* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 412.

²² *OED Online*, s.v. 'dissipation': <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/55496?redirectedFrom=dissipation#eid>, [3 May 2018].

²² Jean Baechler, *Suicides* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), pp. 309-10. See also Pam Lock, 'Death and the Alcoholic: Public Discourses of Alcoholism in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*', *Social History of Alcohol and Drugs*, 29 (2015) 29–47.

²³ John Haslam, *Observations on Madness and Melancholy* (London: J. Callow, 1809), p.77.

²⁴ Graeme Tytler, 'Eating and Drinking in *Wuthering Heights*', *Brontë Studies* 34.1 (2009) 57-66, p. 64.

²⁵ Scott C. Martin, *Devil of the Domestic Sphere. Temperance, Gender and Middle-class Ideology 1800–1860* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), p. 41.

²⁶ Martin, p. 41.

²⁷ Neil Pemberton & Michael Worboys, ‘The invention of the basset hound: breed, blood and the late Victorian dog fancy, 1865–1900’, *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d’histoire*, 22.5 (2015) 726–40, p. 728; Hilda Kean, *Animal Rights. Political and Social Change in Britain since 1800* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), p. 239, n.59. NB. The cropping (removal) of human ears was common in the 13th Century as a punishment for begging and vagrancy but it is clear from Henry Mayhew’s account in *The London Underworld in the Victorian Period* in the 1850s that this was no longer practiced by the nineteenth century and regarded as a severe punishment after the associated act was repealed in 1547. Henry Mayhew, *The London Underworld in the Victorian Period: Authentic First-Person Accounts by Beggars, Thieves, and Prostitutes* (Chelmsford, Mass.: Courier Corporation, 2012), p.310.

²⁸ Thomas John Graham, *Modern Domestic Medicine* (London: Simpkin & Marshall, 1827), p. 161.

²⁹ See Catherine MacGregor, ‘I cannot trust your oaths and promises: I must have a written agreement’: Talk and Text in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, *Dionysos*, 4.2 (1992), 31–39.

³⁰ Gaskell removed this after the third edition (August 1857) stating that: ‘All that is to be said more about Branwell Brontë, shall be said by Charlotte Brontë herself, not by me.’ Elizabeth Gaskell, ‘Explanatory Notes’, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, ed. by Angus Easson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.525, n.227.

³¹ ‘To Ellen Nussey, 31 March 1845’ in Margaret Smith, *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë Volume One* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 455.

³² ‘To Ellen Nussey, 31 March 1845’ in Margaret Smith, *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë Volume One* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 455.

³³ Smith, *Letters*, I, pp. 412; 420.

³⁴ ‘Preface’, *Tenant*, p.40.

³⁵ Robert Macnish, *The Anatomy of Drunkenness* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Carey, 1828), pp. 24–5.

³⁶ Thomas John Graham, *Modern Domestic Medicine*, 1826, annotated throughout by Patrick Brontë, Brontë Parsonage Museum, bb210, Bonnell 210, p. 392. Selected pages including this entry are now available on the British Library Website: <<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/modern-domestic-medicine-annotated-by-the-brontes>>

³⁷ *The Cottage in the Wood*, p. 12

³⁸ Marianne Thormählen quotes the surgeon, Thomas Beaumont, when she notes that ‘writers of treatises on alcohol and alcohol abuse’ shared a conviction that ‘a drunkard may succumb to disorders which a non-alcoholic might have shaken off’. Marianne Thormählen, ‘The Villain of “Wildfell Hall”: Aspects and Prospects of Arthur Huntingdon’, *The Modern Language Review*, 88.4 (1993) 831–41, p. 837.

³⁹ ‘Preface to the Second Edition’, *Tenant*, p. 39.

⁴⁰ ‘Preface to the Second Edition’, *Tenant*, p. 39.

⁴¹ Anon., ‘Inquests under Mr T. Badger, Esq’, *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* (25 September 1841), p. 5.

⁴² ‘To Ellen Nussey, 31 March 1845’ in Margaret Smith, *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë Volume One* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 455.

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